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Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-sixth session
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Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives; priority theme: "The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges"

Statement submitted by African Action on AIDS, Associated Country Women of the World, European Union of Women, Hadassah: Women's Zionist Organization of America, International Alliance of Women, International Association of Democratic Lawyers, International Council of Women, International Federation for Home Economics, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, International Federation of University Women, National Council of German Women's Organizations, Servas International, Socialist International Women, Soroptimist International, Salvation Army, Women's Federation for World Peace International and Women's International Zionist Organization, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2012/1.

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Statement

We the undersigned international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, members of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Status of Women, present for information and consideration by participants of the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women the following statement on the empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication in development and current challenges.

Referring to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the only international human rights instrument with a specific article dedicated to the situation of rural women (article 14),

Referring to the Beijing Platform for Action, which highlights the need for policies and strategies designed to improve the situation of rural women producers, increase their incomes and provide household food security,

Considering key global development frameworks, such as Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, the 2005 World Summit Outcome, the Outcome of the 2010 High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals,

Considering that rural women account for over 80 per cent of the food production in most developing countries, particularly in Africa, but own only 1 per cent of the property, as rural women's property rights are limited by social norms, customs and legislation,

Recognizing the key role of women as preservers of both agrobiodiversity and agricultural knowledge, as well as women farmers' practices,

Considering that improved access of women to education and training contributes to improved food production and food hygiene in the household, thus achieving food security,

Referring to climate change and desertification, in particular in developing countries and the interdependence between vegetation, water and rainfall, in relation to the agricultural use of land,

Deploring "land grabbing" by some countries and companies for the purpose of agricultural production, which excludes the local farmers and leads to speculation by hedge funds and large global companies,

The undersigned NGOs,

- Emphasize the importance of ensuring for rural girls and women access to education and the need to support structures for basic education, secondary education and university education, as well as further education and vocational training, including part-time study, to allow women and girls to cope with agricultural and domestic responsibilities;
- Urge that rural women be trained in appropriate rural technologies so as to increase their knowledge of sustainable agricultural production methods, including improved irrigation, seed production and agroecological methods of farming;

- Call on Governments to implement legislation concerning women's rights to buy, inherit and own land by secure land titles, as well as equal treatment for female farmers in land reform;
- Stress the importance of securing women's access to agricultural extension technology services, marketing facilities and credit schemes;
- Stress the necessity of securing for women unrestricted access to microfinance schemes;
- Call for the provision of measures for financial aid and services enabling women to set themselves up in agricultural enterprises, as well as of measures to shorten the supply chain;
- Recommend decent and productive employment and income-generating opportunities for rural women, as well as programmes to strengthen women's participation and leadership in rural institutions, such as agricultural producers' and rural workers' associations, cooperatives, rural credit unions, water users' groups and self-help groups;
- Call on Governments and regional bodies, international organizations and private initiatives to establish rules guaranteeing the participation of rural women in decision-making for climate change adaptation and mitigation measures and programmes;
- Stress the importance of liberalizing rules and regulations governing trade in agricultural goods, lifting bans on agricultural imports from developing countries, reducing agricultural subsidies in industrialized countries that invariably culminate in the export of surplus agricultural products to developing countries and ensuring that women farmers receive fair financial compensation for their work and products;
- Request respect for internationally accepted agreements between Governments and the indigenous population in order to prevent the detrimental effects of "land grabbing".